
CENTER FOR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

2005 JAN 21 A 9:57

January 12, 2005

The Honorable Michael Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW #8
Washington, DC 20554

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Re: WC Docket No. 03-133

Dear Chairman Powell:

Soon after the September 11 attacks and with U.S. troops engaged in the defense of freedom at home and abroad, the Center for Individual Freedom (CFIF) launched ThankOurTroops.org, an online message board to serve as a forum for people across the country to express their support, respect and gratitude for the many brave men and women in uniform as they carry out their missions. Since its inception, thousands of Americans -- many of whom have little, if any, communication with their loved ones stationed abroad in harm's way -- have posted heartfelt messages. It is efforts like this and other limited means of communication, like the occasional e-mail or phone call, which enables our troops and their loved ones to get through each day.

That is why I am writing today.

It has recently come to our attention that the FCC is poised to decide a matter that could significantly raise the cost of prepaid calling card communications. On behalf of CFIF and its more than 70,000 supporters and activists across the country, I strongly urge you and your fellow commissioners to resist any temptation to allow regulatory changes that would increase the cost of a phone call home for the men and women serving in America's armed forces.

Affordable calls home are critical to keeping morale high among our fighting men and women and providing peace of mind to their loved ones here at home. In fact, this was deemed so important that the Department of Defense (DoD) and U.S. Congress worked together to pass legislation authorizing the DoD to provide prepaid calling cards and other telecommunications support in the amount of \$40 per month to deployed military personnel.

Furthermore, Congress recently went a step further. Language in one of this year's appropriations bills states: "The conferees are aware that members of the armed services and their families make extensive use of prepaid phone cards to stay in contact. The FCC is considering subjecting these cards to increased regulation. The conferees direct the FCC not to take any action that would directly or indirectly have the

effect of raising the rates charged to military personnel or their families for telephone calls placed using prepaid phone cards."

It had been estimated that a regulatory change to allow increased access fees on prepaid calling cards would inflate their cost by as much as 20 percent. This would be a slap in the face to our military personnel and their families who have volunteered to sacrifice so much in defense of freedom.

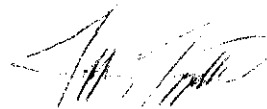
In August, an article in the *Marine Corps Times* read, "Making soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines victims of the intense competition in the telecommunications industry would be a terrible move at the worst possible time."

We couldn't agree more.

Again, I urge you and your fellow commissioners to resist any regulatory change that would increase the cost of communications between America's military personnel and their loved ones at home.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey Mazzella', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jeffrey Mazzella
President

CC: Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein
